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*Leviore Plectro*

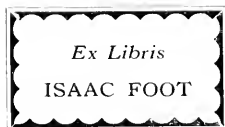


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LEVIORE PLECTRO

(OCCASIONAL VERSES)

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*  
**THE KESTREL'S NEST**  
and Other Verses.

*Fcap. 8vo, 3s. 6d.*

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**LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.**  
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

# LEVIORE PLECTRO

(OCCASIONAL VERSES)

BY

ALFRED COCHRANE

AUTHOR OF 'THE KESTREL'S NEST

AND OTHER VERSES'

„Es blüht eine Zeit und verwelfet“

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

1896

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## DEDICATION

TO —

*When, ten years hence, to stall or stand  
The book-collector comes,  
To twirl the stock of second-hand  
Between inquiring thumbs;*

*When in the dust he burrows deep  
If haply pearls may lurk,  
And cast upon the rubbish heap  
Finds this immortal work,*

*Then let him scoff, to me belongs  
The courage to endure,  
Who leave the Beatrice of my songs  
Unknown, and so secure.*

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## P R E F A C E

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A. C.



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## THE MINOR POET'S APOLOGY

(TO THE PUBLIC)

COULD I but deem myself inspired,  
Or owner of a fancy fired  
By sparks, unwittingly acquired  
From Heliconian flame,  
The Muse, whoever she might be,  
Who had, with motives hard to see,  
Incautiously ignited me,  
Would justly share the blame.

Had I occasion to suspect,  
Or with complacence to reflect,  
That I were destined to erect  
A work outlasting Time ;  
If this were to the public known,  
I might perhaps be left alone,  
As one with reasons of his own,  
For bursting into rhyme.

But, since no Muse inspires my lays,  
Twisted and turned in various ways,  
And hammered out, from phrase to phrase,  
And changed from bad to worse ;

Since none can term the process quick,  
While metres halt and endings stick,  
As I endeavour brick by brick  
To build the lofty verse.

And since I know when all is done,  
When all the scansion neatly run,  
And I put forth into the sun  
My pensive carollings,  
They will, unseen of any eye,  
Disport themselves in print and die,  
Like some midsummer butterfly,  
Without his gorgeous wings.

Since I can feel no patriot's call,  
No goading wrongs, like Juvenal,  
Nor any need to sing at all,  
Then something must be wrong ;  
For even now I've jingled on,  
Discussing every *pro* and *con*,  
Of this absurd phenomenon,  
And sung another song.

## THE FAIR CHILDREN

(AT THE GRAFTON GALLERIES, 1895)

Ay! they grew older, queens and earls  
 And duchesses and kings;  
 They lost their innocence and curls,  
 And put off childish things;  
 They lived and died; for some the lot  
 In goodly ground was cast,  
 While others marred with plan and plot  
 The record of the past.

Young Master Lambton's legs and arms  
 That crimson suit outgrew;  
 Port and experience changed the charms  
 Of jovial Jacky Crewe;  
 The baby Johnson's thunder woke  
 To bellow round the Arts,  
 And Gainsborough's Georgiana broke  
 A score of hapless hearts.

Grew old and faded? God forbid,  
 We view them from afar,  
 And care not what they said or did  
 While they are what they are;

We leave their destinies unknown,  
Their histories all untold,  
Fair children these who have not grown  
And never can grow old.

One fancies how the penance meet  
To rank and quartered shields  
Would lead the ducal chairmen's feet  
Away to Leicester Fields,  
Where Mistress Ann, or Master John,  
Prisoned some sunny day,  
Would wish the hour of durance gone  
And long to be at play.

Here while to many a nurse's hush  
They fidgeted and sighed,  
A mild old gentleman his brush  
With dexterous fingers plied ;  
Who scanned them with benignant glance,  
The trumpet at his ear  
Moving his sitters' mirth, perchance,  
It seemed so monstrous queer.

Yet now they gaze at us with eyes  
Wherein the mischief gleams  
Of long-forgiven rogueries  
And glorious pranks and schemes ;

For those dull hours they found so long  
Due recompense fulfil,  
Showing them to the London throng  
To-day as children still.

And if existence, soon or late,  
Wrote lines across the brow,  
Seared the smooth cheek with love or hate,  
It nothing matters now ;  
The havoc of the flying year  
Can work them little ruth,  
Immortal art has left them here  
Imperishable youth.

## THE OLD VIOLIN

(ANTON. STRADIVARIUS CREMONENSIS  
FACIEBAT ANNO 1704)

It boasts a peerless colour dried  
By suns of Southern lands,  
As fair as when, a thing of pride,  
It left the master's hands ;  
For jealous time forgets and fears  
That velvet sheen to tarnish,  
That mystery guarded through the years  
Of Stradivarius varnish.

Music that once across it swept  
To-day about it clings,  
The threnodies of souls that wept  
Their grief above the strings :  
With voiceless prayers of wild appeal  
That steep it with sensation,  
And make the hands that lift it feel  
A thrill of sad vibration.

So it awakes the note of strife,  
Of gladness or distress,  
And touches hidden cords of Life  
Which words may not express :  
Some strange desire, some vague delight,  
That sets the soul a-wondering,  
As when men hear throughout the night  
The restless ocean thundering.

Surely our wondrous modern wit  
Hath something yet to learn,  
Though progress leap to welcome it  
At each triumphant turn,  
Something, while that frail pinewood toy  
Lies there upon the table,  
And dims our brilliance to alloy  
With yonder dusty label.

## TO AMARYLLIS

(AS I APPROACH HER IN THE SOUTH EXPRESS)

IN former days the squire who sought  
The lady of his taste,  
Would, as a proper suitor ought,  
Make extra special haste ;  
Across the plain and up the hill  
He spurred his palfrey with a will.

I, wooing at a later date  
With equal eagerness,  
Do nothing to accelerate  
This ten fifteen express ;  
To gain her side I take the road  
Equipped with neither spur nor goad.

Love does not lend my journey wings ;  
The speed at which I ride  
All may discern with other things  
Set forth in Bradshaw's Guide ;  
This engine does the best it can  
For sighing swain and business man.



My prototype would never stay  
For vulgar bite or sup,  
He never brooked the least delay,  
But simply hurried up ;  
He passed the hour of dinner by  
With noble scorn—and so do I.

I suck the pensive acid-drop,  
Despising knife and fork,  
Yet this insensate train must stop  
While people lunch at York ;  
Where I shall nurse my futile grief  
And men will eat great plates of beef.

Oh ! could I take the driver's place  
And feed the engine fires,  
Then we should race at treble pace  
Along the startled shires ;  
And every extra lump of coal  
Would bring me nearer to the goal.

That were an outlet for my zeal,  
An act my suit to plead,  
Not equal to the rowelled heel,  
But still a worthy deed ;  
Fulfilling better the idea  
Of Quixote seeking Dulcinea.

But my metallic steed is fleet,  
So let me sleep and dream,  
Inactive in my corner seat,  
Of what I owe to steam ;  
And not forget that while I rhyme  
We rattle onwards all the time.

## FACILIS DESCENSUS

(A RETROSPECT)

No sudden thrill, when first we met,  
Arose my heart to stir,  
The time and place I quite forget  
And what I thought of her :  
I may have praised her shapely head,  
Her graceful form and active,  
The kind of face, I may have said,  
That one would call attractive.

While, hovering on the dangerous brink,  
I saw with friendship's eye,  
'Nice' was the epithet, I think,  
I ventured to apply :  
And when in pleasant act or word  
She laughed at me or teased me,  
It may have struck me as absurd  
To find the process pleased me.

So it went on till, with surprise,  
Upon a blissful date,  
I was compelled to realise  
That I had met my Fate :

Then I described her as divine,  
In view of this credential,  
That to all happiness of mine  
Her presence was essential.

Throughout I felt, you will observe,  
No surge of passion roll,  
No tempest to destroy my nerve  
And overthrow my soul;  
I marked no stormy threatening bank  
Of clouds discharging thunder,  
But, like the *Royal George*, I sank,  
And gracefully went under.

Yet now, if I but hold her hand,  
And look on her sweet face,  
What need have I to understand  
The ethics of the case?  
I only know the secret flame  
Perhaps may burn the purer,  
And Cupid take a noiseless aim  
That he may strike the surer.

## THE BLACKBIRD'S SONG

WHAT was it that the blackbird sang,  
Who whistled in the hedge  
A jovial note that rose and rang  
Along the spinney's edge?

He sang that in a sheltered spot  
That morning he had seen  
A budding snowdrop, and a knot  
Of primrose breaking green.

Whereat domestic visions grew,  
That moved him to recall  
A certain boxbush wet with dew  
Against the terrace wall.

And under his melodious burst  
I heard the blithe refrain,  
That frost and snow had done their worst,  
Yet here were flowers again.

## TO HUMPHREY

(AN INFANT OF QUALITY)

I TURN from the Queen of the Epic,  
Plunging her fiery car  
Through the roar of Homeric battle  
Where the toil-stained warriors are ;  
And the hymn of superb achievement,  
Such as bolder singers use,  
I leave, as I lay my garland  
At the feet of the Nursery Muse.

For she bids me remember, Humphrey,  
That men may be beggars or kings,  
But the way of their coming and going,  
These be momentous things :  
She deems them amazing figures  
To count in the human sum,  
And she holds you a thing of interest  
Already, for you have come.

In the land where the Sun of to-morrow  
Illumines a phantom earth,  
Where you were with the babes of the Future  
That await their hour of birth,

When they called through the summer star-  
light

For the soul of a man to go,  
There were lots of round little Humphreys,  
Standing about in a row.

And some they sent to the palace,  
To be proud of their birth and blood,  
And some they sent to the gutter,  
To be proud of their pies of mud :  
Some to be christened in nectar,  
And some to be soaked in beer,  
But you were a fortunate atom,  
For they settled to send you here.

They ordered the child you played with  
Away to a squalid place,  
While they crowned you the prattling  
monarch  
Of a rich and a noble race ;  
His sires were the common pebbles,  
When Deucalion's rocks were thrown,  
While yours on the foam of the deluge  
Were tossed in an ark of their own.

For still on the boards of existence  
Shall the unknown super stand  
At the side of the strutting player,  
Who is hailed with the clapping hand ;

And still the unanswered problem  
Of the rags and the velvet sticks,  
That a man should be born to the half-  
pence,  
And a man should be born to the kicks.



## MY LADY'S LOOKING-GLASS

A PICTURE fair as ever came  
From painter's brush she looks upon,  
Clear mirrored in this amber frame,  
Wrought years ago by Sheraton.

Yet love hath so o'ermastered me  
And brought me to this craven pass,  
I tremble for what she may see  
When she draws near her looking-glass.

Not lest the sight should make her vain  
My spirit nurses discontent,  
For though she gaze and gaze again,  
Yet this were time discreetly spent.

But ever my unquiet dream  
Will that old parable adduce  
Of one who scanned the silver stream,  
And lost his heart with less excuse.

## TO JOHN BINGHAM

(THE FIRST NAME IN THE REPTON REGISTER, 1620)

You, whose forgotten name appears  
The foremost in the tale,  
We bid you through the vanished years,  
First of Reptonians, hail.

How many flying terms have come  
And gone since you were schooled,  
And pored on exercise or sum,  
When Master Whitehead ruled !

You entered, as the books assert,  
Ere Laud and Wentworth died,  
Before the Chalgrove carbines hurt  
Heroic Hampden's side.

You saw much bitter history made,  
And stirring scenes belike,  
In days when sombre Ironsides bade  
His crop-eared churls to strike.

We picture you a Royalist,  
Whose tender tears would fall  
For that pale figure in the mist  
Of dawn, before Whitehall.

Nay! these be fancies: what we know  
We would in peace enjoy,  
That here, three centuries ago,  
You lived a Repton boy.

And though you pass beyond the Arch  
To distant shadowy realms,  
Yet while the roaring wind of March  
Still rocks these ancient elms,

It is a pleasant thing to find  
That Time, with all his powers,  
Hath left one friendly thread to bind  
Your far-off life with ours.

## IN MEMORIAM

(R. L. STEVENSON, OB. DEC. 1894)

WE whisper a farewell to thee,  
Now passed beyond all praise or blame,  
Magician of the moor and sea.

So vast a heritage have we,  
Left to us in that classic name,  
We whisper a farewell to thee.

Still the salt wind is whistling free,  
The Solway crags with heather flame,  
Magician of the moor and sea.

The black flag flutters out to lee,  
And buccaneers are dying game;  
We whisper a farewell to thee.

Though tears upon the page may be,  
The old enchantment is the same,  
Magician of the moor and sea.

So when in England's memory,  
You pass from life to living fame,  
We whisper a farewell to thee,  
Magician of the moor and sea.

## TO THE STREET-BRED PEOPLE

You who content along the pavement patter,  
 Or in your hansoms roll,  
 And find the ripple of your clubland chatter  
 Enough to feed your soul,

Hear, you brave butterflies, who stroll together  
 Down Bond Street, all alike,  
 This message blown from leagues of purple  
 heather,  
 From fen and field and dyke.

Hear ye the song of those who stand asunder  
 From busy ways of men,  
 Who hold communion with the nameless  
 wonder  
 That haunts the misty glen ;

Who love the wind that whistles through the  
 sedges  
 And flecks the sullen pond,  
 The ruddy ploughland and the dripping  
 hedges,  
 With the blue hills beyond.

When have you listened while the snipe is  
 drumming  
 Above the sallow reeds,  
 Or paused to catch the curlew's whistle com-  
 ing  
 Far-heard across the meads?

When have you, lingering in the forest  
 marches  
 Through twilight of July,  
 Seen the big brown owl stoop between the  
 larches,  
 A noiseless passer-by?

Think you great Nature does not smile  
 supremely  
 At all your little play,  
 Your hackneyed worship of the smart and  
 seemly,  
 You puppets of to-day?

Why, Pan looks upward to the Silver Pleiads,  
 When all the wood is dumb,  
 And softly laughs amid his sleeping Dryads  
 To hear the city's hum.

## TO MY LADY

(AT CROQUET)

I own your eyes are bright and brown,  
I own they turned my head ;  
But now I simply set you down  
In fury as Two Red,  
And pick my ball up with a frown  
From the geranium bed.

At this third hoop in direst need  
I've tarried for an age ;  
While, with a skilfulness, indeed,  
Which aggravates my rage,  
You now triumphantly succeed  
In traversing the cage.

What can the miscreant's name have been,  
I wonder with a sigh,  
Who first placed hoops upon the green  
And wooden balls thereby,  
To make a game at which my queen  
Should be as good as I?



But when the weaker sex begin  
Athletic gulfs to span,  
We men from games we cannot win  
Will turn to those we can ;  
Something where strength will enter in,  
And leave the palm with man.

So, though your aim is deadly true,  
You croquet-playing witch,  
Remember I play cricket too,  
And that my muscles itch  
To bowl my speediest at you,  
Upon a fiery pitch.

In cooler blood I sympathise,  
With all New Woman's aims,  
Her hansom cabs and sailor ties,  
Her latchkey's burning claims.  
But now I doubt if she be wise  
To vanquish us at games.

## TO MY SMALL BROTHER

(AT SCHOOL, AFTER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS)

DEAR Bill, your letter startles me :  
 I was not quite prepared to see  
 So dire a tale of miserie,  
     So sad a case :  
 You feel unwell—the boys are fools—  
 Your fixed opinion is that school's  
     A *beastly* place.

The week has simply crawled away,  
 All has gone wrong in work and play,  
 Stern ushers haul you every day  
     Across the coals.  
 Your football side is always licked,  
 You cannot kick, as once you kicked,  
     Amazing goals.

What's this? Young Smith with impious glance,  
 Searching your *Gradus*, found by chance  
 The programme of our Twelfth Night dance,  
     And laughed forthwith :  
 Whereat you blushed a conscious red  
 And strove, it seems, to punch the head  
     Of grinning Smith?

Our dance—that sentence, I confess,  
Assists me to astutely guess  
The cause of your extreme distress ;  
For I recall  
Some scenes that night which prompted me  
To think *la belle dame sans merci*  
Hath Bill in thrall.

La Belle Dame, who looked very sweet,  
With her white frock and figure neat,  
Her dignity and fan complete,  
Her grown-up airs ;  
And brown locks which my watchful eye  
Observed you pulling on the sly  
Upon the stairs.

At supper, when I saw the pride  
With which the claret-cup you plied,  
And, when she bade you to her side,  
How pleased you were ;  
I trembled for your future pangs,  
Part due perhaps to the meringues,  
But part to her.

My fears were just, and now you paint  
The symptoms of an old complaint  
That comes on sinner and on saint,  
On wise and fool ;  
Which, like the German measles, will  
Render the patient far less ill  
When caught at school.

Whenever Chloe leaves her flocks  
And goes to town to purchase frocks,  
Old Strephon, perched upon the rocks,  
Will sigh and say,  
'How very dull it is to keep  
Watch over these disgusting sheep  
While she's away.'

But you I counsel better cheer,  
For yonder bustling atmosphere  
Ill suits the dolorous cavalier,  
Or moping lover ;  
You soon, I think, will own it weak  
To tolerate young Cupid's cheek,—  
And will recover.

## FROM THE TERRACE

Go, little wreath of smoke, apace,  
Waft your illicit faint perfume  
Across the interdicted space  
Of yonder lamplit drawing-room.

Tell her who lingers there and reads,  
Yet in my absence hides a yawn,  
That the soft voice of summer pleads  
For her sweet presence on the lawn.

Say that above the deep-blue hills  
Hangs, fair to see, the sickle moon,  
And that a mellow fragrance fills  
The orchard mown this afternoon.

Say that your soothing influence,  
With hopeful sentiment combined,  
Inspires to rare benevolence  
A lover who hath newly dined.

And if, perchance, the garden seat,  
Where drowsy beetles wheel and hum,  
Can tempt her not from her retreat,  
And if she still refuse to come,

Then whisper, cigarette of mine,  
Forebodings in her ear apart,  
Of incense offered at a shrine  
That still hath something of my heart.

## LE ROI EST MORT

(Being a Letter from Lieutenant Carew, quartered  
at Bombay, to his sister, Miss Mabel Carew, whose  
engagement to the Earl of Arleston  
was lately made public)

I AM not, my dear Mabel, struck down with  
surprise,

I am not with astonishment dumb,  
In my own generation I'm thoroughly wise,  
And I thought it was likely to come ;  
For we get the Society papers out here,  
With their columns of gossip from town,  
And they warned me the moment was danger-  
ously near  
For the loss of my brotherly crown.

There were reams that I studied with infinite  
zest  
On the gowns and the hats and the games

Of a youthful enchantress come out of the West  
To break hearts at the court of St. James ;  
There were pitiful rumours of tears and of  
sighs,  
Of lost hopes and of baffled desires,  
That were due, we were told, to the sunny  
brown eyes  
Which had dazzled the Somerset squires.

With the lightest of possible sighs I forsake  
My position as king of your heart,  
And I hope that his lordship will own that I  
take  
My deposal in excellent part ;  
I shall fancy, far over the Indian foam,  
That I hear the refrain of the chimes,  
And, be sure, they'll remind me of old days  
at home  
In the sunlight of holiday times,

When I was the dullest of jacketed boys  
That has ever parsed *τύπτομεν* wrong,  
Or fretworked a bracket with horrible noise,  
Or hummed the last pantomime song ;  
Who could eat very often and eat very much,  
And whose manners were boisterous and  
free,



While his charms, if existing, were certainly  
such

As no eyes but a sister's could see,

And Miss Mabel Carew, who in Grosvenor  
Square

Is to-day the most classic of queens, . . .

With her diamonds and lace and her dignified  
air

And her smiles for the dukes and the  
deans,

Was a wild-haired young lady who shouted  
with pride

Such expressions as 'humbug!' and 'rot!'

What an expert she was at a banister  
slide!

What a capital catapult shot!

You remember the great setts of tennis we  
played

On the gravel court under the hill,

And the way we gulped down ginger-beer in  
the shade

Out of bottles with wonderful skill,

And the matches at cricket we fought on the  
lawn,

And the ferrets we nurtured and fed,

And the fir-tree you climbed for a shilling at  
dawn,  
When the powers were all safely in bed.

But your hair flies no more—it is coiled by  
the mile,  
You're propriety's pink, I am sure,  
You play 'preludes' by Bach in immaculate  
style,  
Looking all that is prim and demure;  
And yet when you gracefully render Mozart,  
I can hardly believe you forget  
The occasions on which you have shouted a  
part  
In our old 'Ballyhooley' duet.

When the holidays waned, in the late August  
dews  
We would roam on the terrace alone,  
With the young harvest moon peering over  
the yews,  
For she fancied us Darby and Joan;  
And now, you fair traitress, you gaze, I believe,  
Into eyes, that are *not* mine, with pride,  
And your hand fondly rests on a masculine  
sleeve  
That has not got *my* elbow inside.

Well—and what has he done to deserve your respect?

Answer that—is he equally skilled,  
As you walk through the orchard the hole  
to detect

In the stump where the titmouse will build?  
Has he taught you lob-bowling with cunning  
off-breaks?

Taught you punting a football about?  
Or the suitable treatment of silkworms and  
snakes,  
Or the right sort of fly for a trout?

Just a wish at the set of the brotherly star,  
At the parting that comes in our lives,  
Far the best and the dearest of sisters you are,  
May you be the most happy of wives!  
And when, to console me, I mimic the earl,  
Which appears the correct thing to do,  
May the favour of Fortune award me a girl  
Half as nice, my sweet sister, as you!

## THE GARTEN-MELODIE

WHAT is it? Fairies in the night,  
About Titania's hearth,  
Who take their silver wands, and smite  
The harebells in the garth,

And so make magic melodies,  
That, thrilling such as hear,  
Wake strange unearthly sympathies  
Betwixt a smile and tear.

It may be, while the orchard grass  
Basks in the summer heat,  
The mirth of tiny elves that pass  
Among the meadowsweet;

Or else, perchance, the wistful plaint  
Of some lone sylph that grieves,  
When woods are dank and flowers are faint,  
For withered loves and leaves.

## THE MINUET-DANCER

So, my enchantress in the flowered brocade,  
You call an elder fashion to your aid,  
Step forth from Gainsborough's canvas and  
advance,  
A powdered Galatea, to the dance.

About you clings a faded old-world air,  
As though the linkboys shouted round your  
chair,  
As though the Macaronis thronged the Mall,  
And the French horns were sounding at Vaux-  
hall.

They tread the stately measure to its close,  
The silver buckles and the silken hose,  
Ladies and exquisites that bend and sway,  
Brilliant as poppies on an autumn day.

You dance the minuet and we admire,  
We dullards in our black and white attire,  
Whose russet idyll seems a mere burlesque,  
Set in a frame so far less picturesque.

Yet I take heart ; for Love, the coatless rogue,  
Can scarcely heed what raiment be in vogue,  
Since in good sooth his negligence is known  
As something scandalous anent his own—

And so he whispers, ‘ Eyes were bright and  
brown

Long ere the Powder Tax dismayed the town,  
And faithful shepherds still shall babble on  
Although the rapiers and the frills be gone.’

## TO CYNTHIA

(AFTER ADMITTING IT)

Now that you understand at last  
 My painful situation,  
 My conduct in the anxious past  
 Requires no explanation :  
 You can interpret act and word  
 That may have struck you as absurd.

Nay! you will now contrive to guess  
 Why in my strange condition  
 I viewed your Cousin George with less  
 Approval than suspicion—  
 Your Cousin George, whose charms you hold  
 So versatile and manifold,

On evenings when he came to dine  
 And found himself in clover,  
 While you were playing Rubinstein,  
 And he was turning over,  
 And I sat glaring with a scowl  
 In distant corners, like an owl.

But if you cannot yet discern  
The meaning of the mystery,  
Then let me counsel you to turn  
For instances to history—  
Of things that men, since the year One  
In my distressing case have done.

I quote the unconventional style  
That Paris chose for wooing,  
Or all that nonsense by the Nile  
That was a king's undoing ;  
Or, better still, the precedent  
Of old Achilles in the tent.

But why waste time on facts like these  
In record or mythology ?  
Love for his own absurdities  
Is quite enough apology :  
And when you once are fettered there  
All's sensible as well as fair.



## THE TIDE OF YULE

‘God rest you, merry gentlemen’

Lo! to salute the happy morn,  
 We wake in late December,  
 And find that middle-age has shorn  
 So much that we remember ;  
 So much that once was counted dear  
 Which loses savour, year by year.

A sameness marks these annual joys—  
 The lads from school returning,  
 The Christmas trees, the romps and noise,  
 The raisins bluely burning :  
 The tables everywhere replete  
 With strange unwholesome things to eat.

Nor can we now approve the aims  
 Of midnight carol-singers,  
 The holly round the picture frames  
 Conspires to prick our fingers ;  
 We find the humour less sublime  
 That permeates the pantomime.

Yet since a change affects us thus,  
We may inquire with reason  
Whether the cause be traced to us,  
Or to the festive season ;  
And some things lead us to suspect  
The former inference is correct.

My cynic, yonder chimes that go  
Across the white world pealing,  
Those hackneyed greetings in the snow  
Induce a cheerful feeling,  
And vague heart-warmings, now and then,  
Befitting merry gentlemen.

Then 'Hark the herald,' which in church  
The children in the choir,  
Left by the organ in the lurch,  
Drag with a tuneless fire ;  
For all their lack of skill imparts  
Its old refrain of happy hearts.

Indeed old Santa Claus appears,  
Despite his false position,  
To challenge all the clamouring years  
To shout down his tradition.  
High o'er the storm he lifts his voice,  
And says, and says again, Rejoice !

## POT-POURRI

THE little red rose at the garden gate  
 To a brown bee near him humming,  
 His sorrow told disconsolate,  
 When he felt October coming :  
 'I were glad,' he sighed, 'to lose my pride,  
 And the beauty of my completeness,  
 And the last faint flush of my petals' blush,  
 If I might but save my sweetness.'

Now it chanced, at the wane of the hunters'  
 moon,  
 That a maiden wandered thither,  
 And she sang to herself that late or soon  
 The choicest flowers must wither ;  
 Then she idly stooped where the red-rose  
 drooped,  
 For she pitied his lone condition,  
 And with wide surprise in her beautiful  
 eyes  
 She heard his last petition.

She deemed it were ill to leave him there  
For the autumn wind to grieve him,  
And she schemed withal that his fragrance  
rare,  
Though he died, should never leave him ;  
'Twas October's fate to be overlate  
To fulfil his harsh endeavour,  
For in a gold jar of Satsuma,  
She bade him be sweet for ever.

On the Chippendale shelf his faded bloom  
Is the last and the sweetest comer,  
And he filleth my lady's drawing-room  
With a scent of the vanished summer ;  
And to each knick-knack of bric-à-brac,  
Though he seems but a rustic vagrant,  
Yet the Chelsea man and the Pompadour  
fan  
Confess that he still is fragrant.

## IN MEMORIAM

J. A. FROUDE, OB. OCTOBER 1894

Now, when heroic memories pass  
Like sunset shadows from the grass,  
When England's children cry and stir,  
Each for himself, and few for her,

We may think tenderly of one  
Who told, like no unworthy son,  
Her history, and who loved to draw  
Champions a younger England saw.

We act no critic's part, and when  
They rate him less than lesser men,  
We feel the golden thread that goes  
To link the periods of his prose.

Perhaps our busy, breathless age,  
That leaves unopened history's page,  
Hath need of work like his to strike  
Imperial chords, Tyrtæanlike.

## A NEW ECLOGUE

(AT HYDE PARK CORNER)

DAMON

WE, whom the foliage of the city covers,  
 Reclining on our inexpensive chairs,  
 Can match the converse of Arcadian lovers,  
 And boast advantages that were not theirs.

PHYLLIS

So let us construe into tuneful verses  
 The burden of your sensible remark,  
 And summon once again the reed of Thyrsis  
 To chant a modern eclogue of the Park.

DAMON

For mere appearance, my enchanting Phyllis,  
 You, with your newest thing in hats and  
 frocks,  
 Are more desirable than Amaryllis,  
 Despite the cowslips braided in her locks.

## PHYLLIS

While you, my Damon, matchlessly frock-  
coated,  
Famed for the tying of a perfect tie,  
Well, Corydon was doubtless as devoted,  
But, surely, less attractive to the eye.

## DAMON

Their rustic conversation must have waited  
A tedious while for topics and for news ;  
I weep for Tityrus as he meditated  
The threadbare subject of his woodland  
Muse.

## PHYLLIS

Poor shepherds, I can fancy them together  
Lying upon the hillside half asleep,  
With nothing to discuss except the weather,  
And nothing to admire except the sheep.

## DAMON

And then their pleasures—when had Stre-  
phon mounted  
In Rotten Row the courser full of fire,  
Or in the park of Battersea discounted  
The tortuous peril of the cushion tyre ?

## PHYLLIS

When had his Chloe up the staircase wended  
Through smart At-Homes her fashionable  
way,  
Or on the terrace when the waltz was ended  
Talked amorous nonsense to the coming day ?

## DAMON

Yet, sometimes, when the dust of London  
chokes me,  
And when the glories of the season pall,  
It is as though the voice of Pan invokes me,  
That his domain is better after all.

## PHYLLIS

That crowds are hot, and men and women silly,  
And that the drama runs on ancient lines,  
While, far away from roaring Piccadilly,  
The sunlight trembles through the silent  
pines.

## DAMON

Love may be sweet, where trees have woven  
thickest  
Their cool green solitudes for whispering  
tones,  
Or where the glancing runnel chatters quickest  
His ceaseless melody above the stones.



## PHYLLIS

Since then he charms us in the crowd's confusion,

And where Sicilian skies are blue above,  
Time-honoured seems our dialogue's conclusion,

The omnipresence of the God of Love.

## THE LEAVING OF ARCADY

THYRSIS AND A GOATHERD

THE GOATHERD

COME, Thyrsis, come; least said is soonest  
mended,

So meet me not with angry glance or frown,  
But get thee gone, thy four weeks' leave is  
ended,

And thou must hie thee back to dusty town.

THYRSIS

Nay! this is but my holiday's beginning;  
I did but leave my labours yesterday,  
Or else this planet with a swifter spinning  
Has whirled my month of happiness away.

THE GOATHERD

Such is the plaint eternal of chance comers—  
The halcyon hours with double quickness run  
And in the splendour of Arcadian summers  
The quicker climb the coursers of the sun.

## THYRSIS

Nay! let me stay, for still yon landscape matches  
The eyes of Amaryllis with its blue,  
Save where on mountain crest the grassy  
patches  
Gleam in the sunlight dipped in golden dew.

## THE GOATHERD

To make the pang of thy distress profounder,  
Let me remind thee how, when thou art not,  
Still in the river-reach that twenty pounder  
Will laugh to think upon thy vain Jock Scott.

## THYRSIS

Out on this age of ours, that lacks completely  
Appreciation of the picturesque,  
And forces one who plays the shepherd sweetly  
Back to dull commerce and an office desk.

## THE GOATHERD

Then stay with us, for though the hind or  
hedger  
Toiled as they sang by sunlit Syracuse,  
Yet Thyrsis, adding columns in a ledger,  
Degrades the Muses to a baser use.

## THYRSIS

Yet let this commonplace excuse be pleaded,  
That, though I kneel before the tuneful Nine,  
Far mightier singers than myself have needed  
To earn the sorry wherewithal to dine.

## THE GOATHERD

Here's provender enough ; the busy sickles  
Provide thine oatmeal at the cottage door,  
While to assuage thy thirst the streamlet  
trickles  
Clear and inviting from the upland moor.

## THYRSIS

Much as I praise thy porringer diurnal  
And water clear, remember once again  
The want of cabs and cigarettes eternal  
That vexes public and poetic men.

## THE GOATHERD

Promptly I recognise the situation :  
Thou art, at heart, a man of prose, I see ;  
So doff thy goatskins and thine affectation,  
And get thee far away from Arcady.

## THE OLD YEAR

HE passes in the midnight dews,  
Beneath the winter moon,  
Who was, a week since, daily news,  
And must be history soon ;  
Yet though his tale be almost told,  
Still, with his ebbing breath,  
He weaves his chequered plot of old,  
Of birth and life and death.

In his perennial record now  
Time pens the latest leaf,  
For some to read with laughing brow  
And some with bitter grief ;  
He showed us scenes of warring powers,  
Of blood and stirring fights ;  
He had his share of pregnant hours,  
Of anxious days and nights.

While, all unheeding year or date,  
Deep currents running strong  
Still bear us on the stream of Fate  
To ports of right or wrong :

The ripple of a hidden tide  
That unperceived may roll,  
Becoming where the banks are wide  
A force beyond control.

Whereat the craven fears to fight,  
And mutters, with a sigh,  
That Wrong is victor over Right,  
That Faith and Virtue die ;  
And for the recreant race of man  
Such dread account must fall,  
As makes the prophet shrink to scan  
The future's crystal ball.

Another, as the hour draws nigh,  
Forsakes the scattered feast,  
And draws the casement curtain by  
To look towards the East :  
Who, at the clang of midnight, hears,  
Borne by the chiming bell,  
A message from the unborn years  
That all shall yet be well.

## TO MY COLONIAL COUSIN

To you I sing, who bid me rhyme  
The slender song that follows,  
You flitting from a sunnier clime  
To Etwall with the swallows ;—

Swallows that in the sunlight played,  
Attempting by the dozen  
To make for us what you have made  
Alone, my little cousin.

For thus we trim the altered phrase,—  
One Trinidad new-comer,  
With her bright laugh and sunny ways,  
Can make a perfect summer.

## THE SECOND-HAND FURNITURE SHOP

In a pleasing confusion of eras of taste,  
In a jumble of new and of old,  
The rococo, the classic, the florid, the chaste,  
They are ranged in the shop to be sold ;  
Yet, although but a trace of their grandeur  
survives,  
Though they came to the hammer at last,  
They were gods of the household, and part of  
the lives  
Of the women and men of the past.

You may see the oak-chest from a Royalist line,  
Where the kerchiefs in lavender lay,  
And the glass-fronted bookcase of stately  
design  
That was chiselled in Sheraton's day ;  
You may gaze at the modern magenta that  
flames  
On a suite of Victorian chairs,



And the dining-room sideboard, by Gillow,  
that shames  
All our latter-day gimcrack affairs.

Here's a table that echoes the ring of the glass,  
When the port in the coaster was low,  
On a rollicking night when the Marquis would  
pass  
All the best that the cellar could show ;  
And perhaps in the earliest shimmer of dawn,  
When the page-boy was draining the dregs,  
We may picture the slumbering derelicts  
drawn  
From between those mahogany legs.

And another still wearing the baize that it wore  
When it served for piquet or quadrille,  
Where her Ladyship pulled in the guineas  
galore,  
As she punted with *pam* or *spadille*,  
And the quaint old spinet that Miss Deborah  
played  
To the ballad pathetic or blithe,  
Side by side with the desk where the tribute  
was paid  
When the Rector collected the tithe.

Nay ! leave them alone with the stories they  
know,

Whether gathered from cottage or hall ;  
They are dusty and worn, and they stand in a  
row

While the purchasers chaffer and brawl ;  
And the owners that knew them are laid in  
the earth,

And the laughter is mixed with the tears,  
For they touch the remembrance of sorrow  
and mirth

With a pathos of far-away years.

Who now may distinguish the settle of oak  
Where the clown of the tap-room would sit,  
As he cracked of an evening his primitive joke,  
And the rustics applauded his wit ;  
From the sofa that once was in Goldsworthy  
Chase,

With its dingy old cushions of red,  
Where my young Mistress Dorothy buried her  
face

When they brought back Sir Christopher  
dead ?

Who knows or who cares ? They were sold  
with a sigh,

When a home was dismantled and lost ;

They are bought with a price, and a common-  
place eye

To their merits of style or of cost.

And it is but the fanciful dreamer for whom,

While the wheels of the century stop,

Throng the ghosts in dim corridor, passage, or  
room

In the second-hand furniture shop.



LAYS FROM THE PAVILION  
AND THE LINKS



## ‘W. G.’

(UPON THE COMPLETION OF HIS HUNDREDTH  
HUNDRED IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET)

WELL may we proffer, age and youth,  
 Congratulations meet,  
 And sing what is in sober truth  
 A *fin de siècle* feat.

By many shifts, in many ways,  
 Men strive to win renown,  
 Some measure of the public praise,  
 Laurel or parsley crown.

And still the ladder's slippery rungs  
 Are steeper day by day ;  
 Still fame eludes ; and little tongues  
 Must have their jealous say.

Yet this our champion may defy  
 The word of praise or blame,  
 Who writes his hundredth century  
 Against his mighty name,

And, in an era prone to boast  
A somewhat sickly wit,  
Inspires our jaded voice to toast  
The vigorous and the fit.

Ah! we had liefer see decay  
A score of serious fads,  
Than face the hour when he shall lay  
Aside his bat and pads.

Wherefore we wish him many a run  
As tribute to his skill,  
And when our century is done  
May he make centuries still!



## TO PHYLLIS

WHO HAS DEGENERATED, AND MAY DEGENERATE  
FURTHER

PHYLLIS, when I knew you first,  
Croquet was the fashion ;  
You were best and I was worst,  
Yet you had compassion ;  
All my piteous lack of aim  
Vexed your soul but slightly,  
And, although we lost the game,  
Still you smiled politely.

Phyllis, in lawn-tennis times,  
In the sunny garden,  
You beheld a partner's crimes,  
With a gracious pardon ;  
Feeble strokes you would forget,  
Frequent ' faults ' were venial,  
When our foes had won the sett,  
Still I found you genial.

Phyllis, now at golf you play,  
Where the world is bleakest,  
And my skill, I grieve to say,  
Still is of the weakest :  
Sternepithets you choose,  
Uttered more succinctly,  
Over foursomes that we lose  
You are rude distinctly.

Phyllis, at the sandy tee,  
Humble effort spurning,  
Future years, alas ! may see  
You to football turning :  
Where, while middle age will own  
Imitation painful,  
I shall find your silvery tone  
Even more disdainful.

## MONOTONOUS BALLADE OF ILL- SUCCESS

BEHOLD me batting—as I fail

Once more to stop the crafty slow ;  
I hear the click of smitten bail,

The wicket-keeper's tactless crow ;  
I have been in and out, and lo !

My aggregate remains the same ;  
Another nought !—six in a row ;

And yet it's an uncertain game.

Behold me bowling—tired and pale

I see the striker's visage glow ;  
He hits them to the boundary rail,  
He hits them high, he hits them low ;  
For he is playing like a pro,

While I have lost my length and aim ;  
Another four ! I told you so ;

And yet it's an uncertain game.

Behold me fielding—thick as hail

Come balls to stop where'er I go,  
And still betwixt my shins they sail,

Snick, drive, or cut, or overthrow ;

The while I gallop to and fro,  
 Bombarded with loud shouts of blame ;  
 Another miss ! the word was 'blow' ;  
 And yet it's an uncertain game.

ENVOY

Friend, cricket is a fraud, I know,  
 Trading on legendary fame ;  
 I find it very certain woe ;  
 And yet it's an uncertain game.

## ARMA VIRUMQUE

(The Bat with which J. T. Brown made his great score against Australia was exhibited in a London shop-window)

AGAINST the window young and old  
 Pressed eager noses flat,  
 Thousands all anxious to behold  
 The justly famous bat.

The youth of London, well content,  
 The future Peels and Gunns,  
 Stared at the magic implement  
 That made so many runs.

And some of those who came to stare  
 Admired it through the pane,  
 Enlarging with the expert's air  
 Upon its blade and grain.

But one poor player, who had made  
 More noughts than runs, maybe,  
 Wondered why here should be displayed  
 A slice of willow tree.

‘It won the rubber,’ murmured he,  
‘Why, that was very good,  
Yet, after all, it seems to me  
A common piece of wood.

‘Show us the pencil, if you will  
With which Sir Joshua drew,  
The inkpot Scott was wont to fill,  
And Roberts’ billiard cue.

‘Arms and the man! It is not that  
Which purchases renowns,  
For many men can buy a bat,  
But very few be Browns.’

## IS GOLF WORTH PLAYING?

(BY A DISPIRITED DEVOTEE)

Is golf worth playing, when the gale  
Blows with a boisterous roar,  
When slashing drives obliquely sail  
Far out across the shore,  
When on the green I may be seen  
Playing eleven, or more?

Is golf worth playing on the days  
When every lie is low,  
And all is a disheartening maze  
Of top and heel and toe,  
When far and high the divots fly  
At each abortive blow?

Is golf worth playing, when events  
So dismally befall,  
That they constrain me to descents  
Of chasm that appal,  
Wherein I stand knee-deep in sand  
Beside my bunkered ball?

Is golf worth playing? ay or no ;  
Let others praise or scoff,  
Bad habits all too swiftly grow  
Beyond the shaking off ;  
So how shall I attempt reply  
Who am a slave to golf?



## BALLADE OF THE BLUES

I CARE not for the legends told  
 Of fights by land or sea,  
 Of fiery clouds of combat rolled,  
 Of lance or chivalry ;  
 This mimic tourney is to me  
 Worth several Waterloo's,  
 While I am watching, from Block D,  
 This battle of the Blues.

Here countless mighty chiefs of old  
 About the ropes will be,  
 Batsmen whose names are writ in gold,  
 Bowlers of high degree ;  
 Who fought long summers since, perdie,  
 And now must humbly choose  
 To view from bench or balcony  
 This battle of the Blues.

And kingdoms may be bought or sold,  
 Great armies fall or flee,  
 While Fry is caught or Latham bowled,  
 Or Douglas hits a three :

The world of faddist or M.P.  
No longer may amuse  
The cheering crowds that sit and see  
This battle of the Blues.

## ENVOY

Fate, send us sunshine, send us free  
Fair cricket, win or lose,  
In this historic rivalry,  
This battle of the Blues.

## THE CATCH

(A MEMORY)

STUPENDOUS scores he never made,  
But perished ever with despatch;  
No bowling genius he displayed,  
But once, in a forgotten match,  
He made a catch.

No doubt a timely stroke of luck  
Assisted him to do the trick;  
He was at cover and it stuck;  
It travelled fairly low and quick,—  
The kind that stick.

His friends the proud achievement classed  
As fortune's most eccentric whim,  
And ere a week or two had passed  
The memory of the catch grew dim  
To all but him.

To all but him, for he relates,  
With varying ornament and phrase,  
The story to the man who waits  
Unwilling in pavilion ways,  
On rainy days.

The catch has grown in splendour now—  
He had a dozen yards to run ;  
It won the match, as all allow,  
And in his eyes there blazed the sun,  
And how it spun !

Life of old memories is compact,  
And happy he, for whom with speed  
Blossoms a gorgeous tree, where fact  
Has planted, in his hour of need,  
A mustard seed.

## THE ENTHUSIAST'S LOVE-SONG

(OVERHEARD AT LORDS)

My Cynthia, whom I kneel before,  
 And every moment worship more,  
     Ay ! though I feel  
     A patriot zeal  
 At Oxford piling up a score.

Believe me, though my voice you hear  
 Upraising the spasmodic cheer,  
     All else will find  
     My eyes are blind  
 When you—well hit, by Jove !—are near.

Here, on this coach-box, far above  
 The heated crowds that surge and shove,  
     Ah ! be not cold  
     While I unfold  
 My tale—good stroke, indeed !—of love.

So do not, with that ruthless pout,  
My single-souled devotion doubt,

That is so plain—

Well hit again!—

For I adore you—run it out!

## TO LUCASTA

(ON GOING TO THE WICKETS)

Bid me not, dallying at thy side,  
Shun peril and renown ;  
My place, I mention it with pride.  
Is second wicket down.

Besides, you make spectators gasp,  
While, sinking in a heap  
On the pavilion steps, you clasp  
My padded knees and weep.

Such partings on a cricket-ground  
Are scarce the usual style ;  
I see the scorer looking round  
With an attentive smile.

Right well the dangers I regard  
Which round the creases lie,  
No one finds cricket-balls more hard,  
Or knocks hurt more than I.

Yet surely these are tender fibs,  
While, with a voice of woe,  
You picture short ones in the ribs,  
And yorkers on the toe.

Yon bowlers are but medium quick,  
And pitch them up, my love ;  
Behold, my pads are passing thick,  
I wear a right-hand glove.

So let me go whate'er befall,  
And I will make a score,  
I should not love thee, dear, at all,  
Loved I not batting more.



## THE GOLFER'S DREAM

(AFTER LONGFELLOW)

BENEATH the uncarried ridge he stood,  
 His niblick in his hand ;  
 His throat was bare, his matted hair  
 Was thickly mixed with sand,  
 And the words he spake made his caddie quake,  
 Though he failed to understand.

As he cursed the pride that had made him strive  
 To reach that green in three,  
 For the sun was high in the April sky  
 When he drave off the tee ;  
 And now it was low and he did not know  
 Nor care what his score might be.

But he dreamed a dream as he smote away,  
 Churning the sand full sore,  
 And his futile strokes and the caddie's jokes  
 Could torture him no more ;  
 And he did not mind the couple behind,  
 Who were idly shouting ' Fore !'

He dreamed that he played on a phantom links  
Where nothing went ever wrong,  
Where his putts were bold, but were always  
holed,  
And his cleek shots wondrous long ;  
Where he stood hole-high with a perfect lie  
From a drive that was straight and strong.

For it was to a golfer's paradise  
That his bunkered soul had fled,  
Where the slice was not, nor the foozled shot  
Nor the driver's broken head ;  
And oft he could feel his mashie of steel  
Laying his second dead.

Till a voice in his ear brought him back again  
To his toil and his grief, alas !  
And he sadly woke as his caddie spoke  
From his couch on the dewy grass ;  
'There's a pair below as have sent to know  
If you'd kindly let 'em pass !'

28<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1896









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